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ABSTRACT

The Special Projects Competition is a separate federal government priority authorized to support an increased quantity and improved quality of personnel available to educate infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. Special project grants provide a means for the conceptualization of new approaches to preparation programs, the improvement of existing types of programs, and the opportunity to gain experience with prototypes. An historical analysis of 491 special projects funded from 1968-90 through the Division of Personnel Preparation in the United States Office of Special Education Programs was conducted to examine a variety of items such as year of award, applicant agency, project director, state, target population, content, and dollar amount. The percentage of inservice versus preservice is analyzed. The portion of training funds allocated to this priority is reviewed. The projects are analyzed against the backdrop of the movements in the profession at large, such as progressive inclusion, a holistic focus including the ecology of the child, the changing role of administration and personnel preparationprograms, and an infiltration of technology. (29 references) (Author/JDD)

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SPECIAL PROJECTS: AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

An historical analysis of 491 special projects funded from 1968-90 through the Division of Personnel Preparation in the Office of Special Education Programs was conducted to look at a variety of items such as categorical trends. These were compared against the backdrop of the movements in the profession at large. Items tabulated included year of award, applicant agency, project director, State, target population, content; and dollar amount. The percentage of inservice versus preservice is illustrated. Lastly, the portion of training funds allocated to this priority is presented.

SPECIAL PROJECTS: AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Introduction

Since 1968 the Special Projects Competition has been a separate priority authorized to support an increased quantity and improved quality of personnel available to educate infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities. The competition lies within the purview of the Training Personnel for the Education of the Handicapped program (CFDA 84.029), designed by Congress and administered by the Department of Education through the Division of Personnel Preparation (DPP) within the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS).

This priority supports both preservice and inservice training for special educators, related services personnel, and regular education personnel who serve children and youth with disabilities. The most recent description of Special Projects (S. 1824, Sec.631 (b)) states:

> The Secretary may make grants to institutions of higher education and other appropriate nonprofit agencies and organizations to develop and demonstrate effective ways for preservice training programs to prepare regular educators to work with children and youth with disabilities and their families; for training teachers to work with community and disabilities and their families; for inservice and preservice training of personnel to work with minority infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities and their families; for preservice and inservice training of special education and related services personnel in the use of assistive and instructional technology to benefit infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities; and for the recruitment and retention of special education, related

services, and early intervention personnel. Both preservice and inservice training shall include a component that addresses the coordination among all service providers, including regular educators.

The purpose of this study is to provide an historical (albeit informal) analysis of the special projects (N=491) which have been avarded to grantees on Federal monies over the years. Information is based solely upon records available to the authors at the time of writing, and in no way substitutes for the official files of the U.S. Department of Education.

For reporting purposes, disabilities are categorized by the language and definitions used in Public Lav 94-142. The Code of Federal Regulations, Sections 300-399, (revised 1989) constitutes the frame of reference. The specific data drawn from the funded grants includes: (a) year start up, (b) applicant agency, (c) project director, (d) State, (e) target population, (f) content descriptors, and (g) amount of the avard.

Legal Entitlement

The original legislation authoring the Training Personnel for the Education of the Handicapped Program was established under Pub.L. 85-926 enacted in 1958. Special projects were initiated in 1966 under the aegis of Pub. L. 89-10. Table 1 encapsulates the continuing amendments of the Education of the Handicapped Act, Part D, that have buttressed the statute to the present day.

Insert Table 1 about here

Major Movements in Special Education

Legislation providing legal entitlement for service provision to individuals with special needs has not evolved in isolation.

Trends in the field of special education, shaped by and resulting in a proliferation of court cases as well as research initiatives, have influenced the impetus of applications for grant competitions. The special projects program, by awarding grants which recognize the visionary stance of applicants, encourages the development of approaches toward inservice and preservice personnel preparation which are innovative. Major movements in special education which reflect and inspire innovation include: (a) progressive inclusion, (b) a holistic focus including the ecology of the child, (c) the changing role of administration and personnel preparation programs and, (d) an infiltration of technology.

Progressive Inclusion

The evolution of special education can be viewed as one of progressive inclusion (Reynolds, 1988). Traditionally alienated in private, residential institutions, individuals with disabilities are beginning to demand services within local communities. Landmark court cases such as Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia (1972) and Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (1971) affirmed the rights of students with disabilities to access services in public schools. The importance of inclusion was recognized in the passage of Public Law 94-142 under the provision of the "least restrictive environment" which guarantees that students with handicaps be educated in settings with non-handicapped peers to the greatest extent appropriate. Subsequent litigation has upheld that placements be based on multiple criteria, not simple test scores (e.g., Larry P. v. Riles, 1979; Parents in Action (PASE) v. Hannon, 1980), and that placement in a special school is indeed restrictive and

stigmatizing (e.g., Lora v. Board of Education of the City of New York, 1984). The movement known as the Regular Education Initiative (REI) continues to promulgate the concept of inclusion for students with disabilities into integrated settings (Garter & Lipsky, 1989; Stainback & Stainback, 1989).

Holistic Focus including the Ecology of the Child

The intent of special education services has evolved from one of academic remediation into an approach which addresses not only the cognitive area of child growth and development, but also the social, emotional, physical and behavioral domains. The scope of related services needed to benefit from educational interventions has broadened to include basic care and augmentative technology as integral components of the intervention. Decisions in court cases such as North, et el,. v. D.C. Board of Education (1979), Kruelle v. New Castle (1981), Department of Education, State of Hawaii v. Katherine D. (1984), and Irving ISD v. Tatro (1984), have upheld the premise that emotional needs of the child cannot be separated from educational needs and therefore, services which involve technologies related to tracheostomy and clean intermittent catheterization care can indeed be provided by schools.

Along with meeting the needs of the whole child, special education as a field has witnessed an increased involvement in each student's ecology. P.L. 94-142 identified the importance of parental participation in their child's Individualized Educational Program (IEP) including delineation of specific procedures of due process for parents/guardians who disagree with school district's decisions. P.L. 99-457 addresses the child's ecology through the requirements of an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) which is written to outline the needs of not only the child, but the child's family as well. The whole child is recognized in the

early, family-focused, transdisciplinary team approach promoted by P.L. 99-457.

Regarding post-school experiences, Polk v. Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit 16 (1988) ruled that the district must provide educational opportunities which result in "meaningful" benefits, not "trivial" programming for students receiving special services. Educational interventions should result in an enhanced overall general functioning for the student. P.L. 99-457 reflected the increased avareness that schools are responsible for preparing students for life beyond the schoolhouse door by mandating that an Individual Transition Plan (ITP) be written for each student age 16 and older. Clearly, the concept of special education has evolved to include consideration of the whole child.

Changing Role of Administration and Personnel Preparation

As parents and advocates have championed an increase in services provided to students with disabilities, the role and nature of administrative cognizance and personnel requirements have also progressed. Administrators have been forced to assume leadership for a variety of comprehensive programs and are held accountable for eligibility and placement of the student. Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) have necessarily become sensitive to certification requirements and training needs among the professional workforce.

Both administration and personnel preparation programs have been influenced by research on effective schools. Following the publication of A Nation at Risk (National Commission, 1983), schools responded to initiatives to promote excellence in education. Potentially devastating for students with special needs, the excellence movement translated into an increased

emphasis on testing, greater coursework requirements in academic skills, rigid graduation requirements, and higher standards for school behavior (Shav, Biklin, Colon, Dunn, Kramer, & DeRoma-Wagner, 1990). The publication of To Secure our Future (National Center on Education and Economy, 1989) resulted in a second wave of reform, school reneval or restructuring. The impetus of school reneval is upon improving the learning and working environments within schools. Characteristic of school reneval is a proliferation of collegiality, experimentation and risk-taking. Schools climates are analyzed for improvements in general education which will facilitate the typical student's growth as well as incorporate the student with disabilities into the regular system. These research and political movements will have an ever increasing effect on the role of administration and personnel preparation programs.

Infiltration of Technology

The advances in technology have made possible an avalanche of assistive devices for individuals with severe disabilities. As a consequence, the number of applications to the special projects competition have proliferated in such areas as interactive video discs, communication boards, computer assisted instruction, and satellite consortia. In 1990 alone, 18% of the proposals submitted addressed compensatory technology. It is fortunate that the sheer quantity of hardvare and softvare have reduced consumers' financial outlay and increased the cost benefit to so many people.

Even this brief discussion illustrates hov the ebb and tide of special projects content has paralleled the trends in the field of special education at large including legislation, litigation, policy, and philosophy. What follovs is an snapshot of hov and

when the special projects began and the paths they took.

Evolution of Special Projects

In 1963 then Commissioner of Education James Allen assigned the responsibility of the Training Personnel for the Education of the Handicapped program to the Division of Training Programs (DTP) in the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (BEH), U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). Associate Commissioner of BEH Edwin Martin wrote in 1970:

> One of the important tools in the award program for the last five years has been the program development grant.
>
> Originally this concept was designed to include two basic purposes, i.e., to develop programs by using the best of currently accepted training approaches and, secondly, to develop and evaluate prototypes of major strategies to improve the quality of training for existing types of personnel or the feasibility of training new types of personnel.
>
> The first purpose of the program development grant concept has been well served since its inception. The second purpose, for a variety of reasons, has not adequately materialized. Yet, the new developments that occur within the field, coupled with contributions from an active educational technology, dictate approaches that bring together into an effective focus all the knowledge currently available. It seemed appropriate, therefore, to separate the two purposes and draw special attention to the second purpose by instituting the special projects type of award. (pp. 2-3).

In June of 1968, Leonard Lucito, Director, DTP, had asked Harold Heller, Chief of the Mental Retardation Branch to develop

guidelines and criteria for soliciting proposals for this new program function. An internal memo (1973) describes it as such:

> The special project differs from the program development grant in that it emphasizes departures from present practices. The special project is designed to provide for a greater amount of flexibility in the types of personnel that are prepared than is currently being realized under the program development grant award.
>
> Program development grant proposals have generally been oriented to following accepted approaches for preparing personnel, whereas the specific nature and orientation of special projects cannot be anticipated. Special project grants provide a means for the conceptualization of new major approaches to preparation programs, the improvement of existing types of programs, and the opportunity to gain experience with prototypes.

Objectives

Special project awards will be utilized to plan, initiate, and evaluate new programs for the preparation of personnel to serve handicapped children.

The Special projects award program will provide an opportunity for conceptualizing and implementing, on a trial basis, approaches which are basically new or which are significant major modifications of existing programs. The purpose of this program is to encourage and facilitate innovative approaches to the solution of major training problems. These projects are not intended to provide for minor modifications of existing programs, nor to support projects which are fundable under other programs within the Office of Education. In this regard, the training of

> regular educational personnel including such specialists as counselors, educational technology specialists, and others with an interest in the special programs presented by the handicapped will be primarily supported by programs under the Bureau of Educational Personnel Development (BEPD) (pp 1-3).

In late 1968 the initial funding and operation of six projects began. The number of Special Projects grew very quickly building to a peak number of 84 in 1972 at which time Richard Whelan was Director, DTP; Elliot Richardson was Secretary, HEW; Terrel Bell was Acting U.S. Commissioner of Education; and Sidney Marland became Commissioner.

> Special Projects were originally designed to facilitate the planning, development, evaluation and dissemination [description still used today] of new models for the training of personnel to educate handicapped children. This is a broad and laudable goal for a program. However, in part, the initial rationale for funding special projects related to the overall funding procedure in DTP. Funding was totally by categories. There were separate funding allocations for training programs in the areas of mental retardation, learning disabilities, emotionally disturbed, visually handicapped, speech and hearing, physical education and recreation, deaf, crippled, other health impaired, and administration. Later, programs in multihandicapped, early childhood, [not a 99-457 invention!] and interrelated areas were added. Thus, grant applications were required to be completely categorical and separate. For example, a university department of special education with training in four of these areas would be required to submit four

separate applications to DTP.

> This procedure tended to force categorical lines that represented artificial barriers not reflected in the needs or behavior of the children to be served by the trainees of these programs, particularly moderately and mildly handicapped children [LRE already!]. To some extent Special Projects allowed grantees flexibility in training, by not conforming to strict categorical lines, while not suffering the loss of funding due to their lack of conformity (1973 p.2).

The perspective of "cutting edge", "innovative idea"; and "risk taking" is prevalent throughout the evolution of special projects. What follows is a delineated analysis of those grants from 1968 to 1990.

Analysis of Special Projects

Information remaining across the years was not always consistent due to the changes of administration, their reporting alterations and priorities, the differences in eligible applicant agencies, the modification of allowable activities, or loss of complete files. What is presented includes a compilation of projects by content/curriculum emphasis and categorical trends (Figure 1); codes by which data were categorized in Figure 1 (Table 2); Number of special projects awarded to various States (Table 3); the percentage of special projects going either to preservice or inservice (Figure 2); the categorical funds that were allocated to special projects out of the DPP budget (Figure 3); the actual dollar amount awarded to special projects (Figure 4); and the number of special projects awarded by year (Figure 5).

Fourteen categories were used to analyze the content trends of funded projects from 1968 to '79 compared to those funded from

1980 to '90 (See Figure 1). The number of funded special projects range from one grant focusing on autism between 1980 to 1990 to a high of 39 projects in general special education in both 1968-'79 and 1980-'90; and 39 projects targeting related service issues between 1980-'90.

It is interesting to note that topical trends in the field of special education could be superimposed on the funding trends to track targeted areas of special projects throughout the years. For example, vocational services received a large portion of the funding in 1986, the same time period when transitional services, functional curricula, and community training became 'buzz' words in the field.

Insert Figure 1 about here

The rav data above, coded into fourteen categories (See Table 2) do not contain duplicate counts of grants. Therefore, those projects addressing several topics were categorized by primary emphasis area. The data chart may be misleading unless the reader is aware that there may be additional projects researching areas in an indirect fashion (i.e., a project focusing on parent training of infants and toddlers with mental retardation would be placed in the parent category).

Insert Table 2 about here

Some insightful perspectives, far too many to list, have been embedded in special projects over the years. Many content areas were addressed far before the topic became vogue in the literature or within funding priorities. To mention but a few:

- A sizeable grant in 1970 went to train trainees in the use of dogs as aides for deaf individuals.
- 28% of the special projects allocation in 1971 was awarded for model programs in severe and profound disabilities.
- 1973 saw a consortium funded as a coordinated approach to physical education and therapeutic recreation for secondary students.
- An inter-institutional model of 51 leading colleges and universities was designed in 1971 to stimulate change and improvement in preparation programs for general and special education administrators.
- Curriculum was developed in 1970 for serving inner city minority children with communications disorders.
- A computer based information project was developed as a catalyst to implement and evaluate teacher, parent, and paraprofessional training of autistic pre-schoolers in 1975.

Special Projects is the only competition within the DPP other than the SEA priority which allows inservice training. With the mass teacher shortage dilemmas in education, this inservice component allows State and local education agencies to upgrade present personnel to meet particular shortage areas with trained staff. Of the special projects analyzed, 38% addressed preservice needs at IHEs, and 62% went for inservice training needs of currently employed personnel (See Figure 2).

Insert Figure 2 about here

The special projects competition has awarded a total of $34.5

million since the inception of the program in 1968. The allocation has seen several increases, as shown in Figure 3. The avarded funds range from $3.512 million during 1968-'70 to $9.733 million during 1976-'80.

Insert Figure 3 about here

The percentage of DPP monies allotted to funding nev applications in the special projects competition each year has varied from a minimum of 3% in 1986 to a high of 10% in 1982 and 1984 (See Figure 4). Due to a national reduction in appropriations to the Department of Education from Congress for fiscal year 1986, only one nev project vas funded. The grant focused on instructional techniques involving children and youth with severe emotional disturbance.

Insert Figure 4 about here

The functional link between the national economy, Congressional appropriations, and the educational research funding resulted in a range of the number of special projects (N=491) fluctuating from 1 to 38 in a single year. Figure 5 illustrates that the number of special projects avarded between 1968 and '70 vas 60; between 1971 and '75 (148); between 1976 and '80 (76); between 1981 and '85 (85); and between 1986 and '90 (122).

Insert Figure 5 about here

Special projects are avarded through an annual peer reviev competition. The number of avards per State are listed from the

information that was available (See Table 3).

Insert Table 3 about here

Conclusion

The collective wisdom of the Education Department officials who initiated the special projects competition and the Congress that corroborated its approval is borne out by the impact this priority has had on advancing the profession. Over $34.5 million Federal dollars have been awarded to applicant agencies with the foresight to plan, to pilot, and to try innovative and creative models in preparing personnel who serve individuals with disabilities. These grants provide the goals whereby the field is assisted in developing and testing new approaches and in disseminating for the purpose of sharing successes and failures with colleagues.

In the early days of personnel preparation, funds were awarded almost exclusively by categorical handicap. Special projects were an attempt to bridge labels, and as time would tell, were very successful in doing so. When the University Affiliated Facilities (UAFs) came into existence special projects provided a vehicle whereby special education brought to bear a significant influence on pediatric care and the whole gamut of multidisciplinary intervention for child and family programming.

To demonstrate the continuing credibility, influence, and importance of special projects, as recently as May, 1990, seven professional organizations made the following statement regarding the crisis of teacher shortages; "There needs to be a greater utilization of the special projects' authority and investment in developing better knowledge about how to prepare personnel and

improving the curricula that are used in preparation programs" (NASDSE, p.6).

The special projects priority is similar to other competitions within the discretionary training grant program in that the Secretary acts on recommendations of review panels of experts from outside the Department of Education. Unlike other competitions, it provides generous authority and a gestalt of personnel preparation. It can see the future!

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Table 1. Authorizing legislation

Year	Pub.Law	Key Provisions
1958	85-926	Assisted colleges, universities and State educational agencies in the training of leadership personnel in the education of mentally retarded students.
1963	88-164	Authorized prep programs for mentally, retarded, deaf, speech/hearing, visually impaired, emotionally disturbed, crippled, & OHI.
1966	89-10	Authorized Federal assistance to State operated and supported schools for handicapped children.
1967	90-170	Allowed preparation of specialists for physical education and therapeutic recreation for handicapped students.
1970	91-230	Consolidated legislation related to children with handicaps. (Title VI)
1975	94-142	Assured procedural safeguards, due process, and a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for every child.
1983	98-199	Specified certain priorities to be funded, i.e., special educators, related services, leadership personnel, special projects, and parents.
1986	99-457	Added State formula grant program to assist in early intervention services for handicapped infants and toddlers and their families. Required applicant to request monies based upon present and projected personnel needs.

Figure 1.

Special projects:
Categorical trends

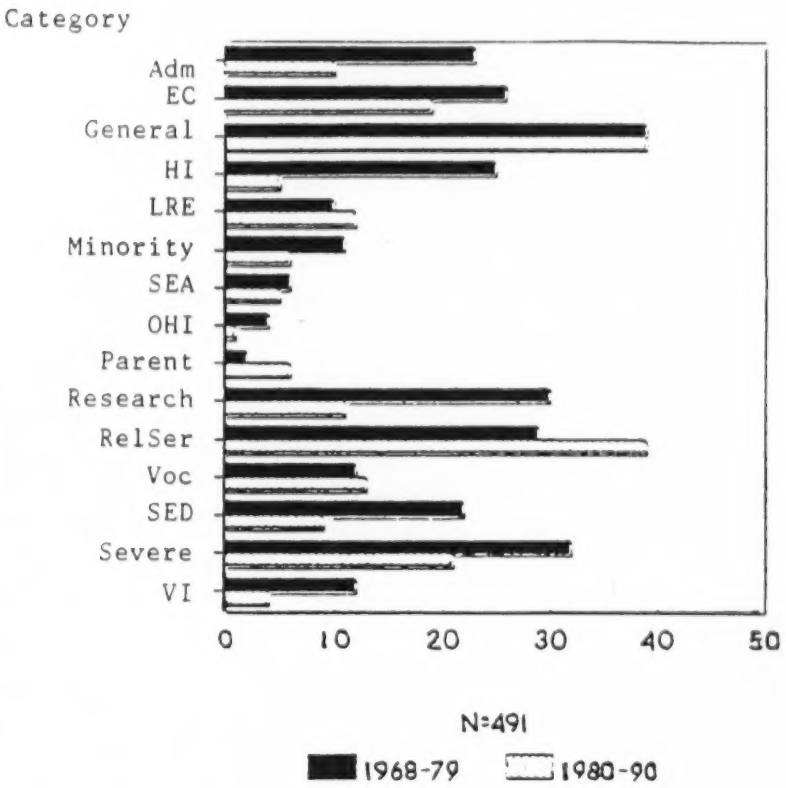


Table 2. Codes by which data were categorized in Figure 1

Code	Category	Primary Focus
ADM	Administration	administrators, supervisors, of regular &/or special education
EC	Early Childhood	early childhood, infant focus
GEN	General Special Education	MR, LD, content, generic educational benefits
HI	Hearing Impairments	P.L. 94-142 definition
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment	special education & regular education collaboration
MIN	Minority	racial, ethnic, or linguistic diversity
OHI	Other Health Impairments	P.L. 94-142 definition
PAR	Parent	parent (separated from related service projects)
RS	Related Services	"speech path., psychological services, PT, OT, REC, early intervention, counseling, medical services for diag/eval, health/social work in schools, parent counseling/training" (Code of Federal Regulations, 1990)
RES	Research	teacher training, research
VOC	Vocational Education	transition, community based
SED	Serious Emotional Disturbance	P.L. 94-142 definition
SEV	Severe Disabilities	multihandicapped, severe
VI	Visual Impairments	P.L. 94-142 definition

Table 3. Number of special projects awarded to respective States 1968-90

STATE	NUMBER	STATE	NUMBER
AL	6	MO	8
AK	6	MT	0
AS	0	NE	2
AZ	7	NV	0
AR	0	NH	3
CA	18	NJ	7
CO	11	NM	6
CT	8	NY	33
DE	0	NC	7
DC	51	ND	0
FL	20	OH	17
GA	11	OK	0
GU	2	OR	11
HI	2	PA	20
ID	2	PR	1
IL	17	RI	2
IN	11	SC	1
IA	10	SD	3
KS	28	TN	8
KY	6	TX	14
LA	2	UT	11
ME	1	VT	4
MD	2	VA	20
MA	22	VI	0
MI	18	WA	16
MN	18	WV	2
MS	2	WI	14
		WY	0

N = 491

Figure 2. Percentage of special projects: Preservice vs inservice 1968-90

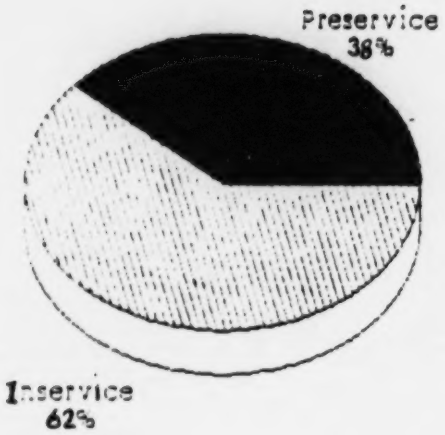


Figure 3. Training funds awarded to special projects

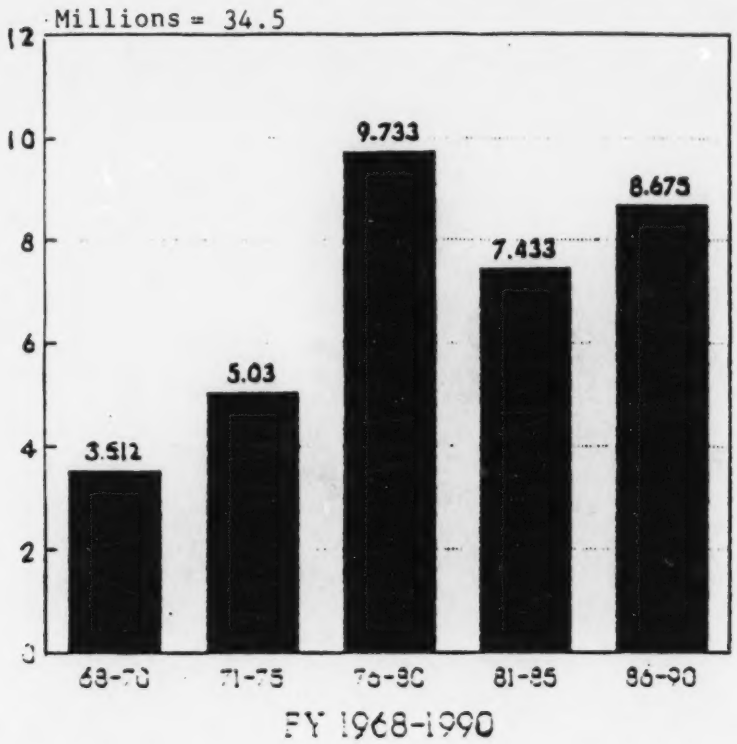


Figure 1. Number of special projects awarded by years

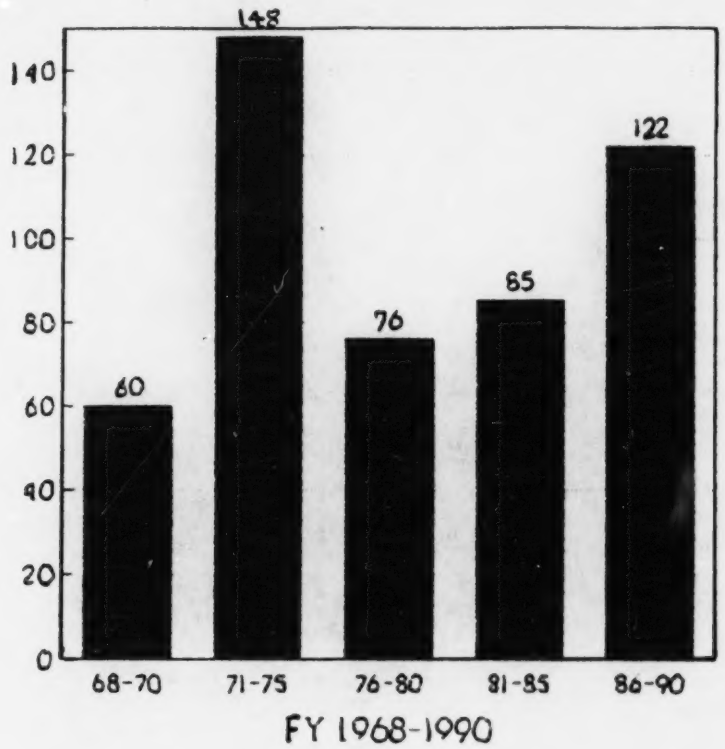
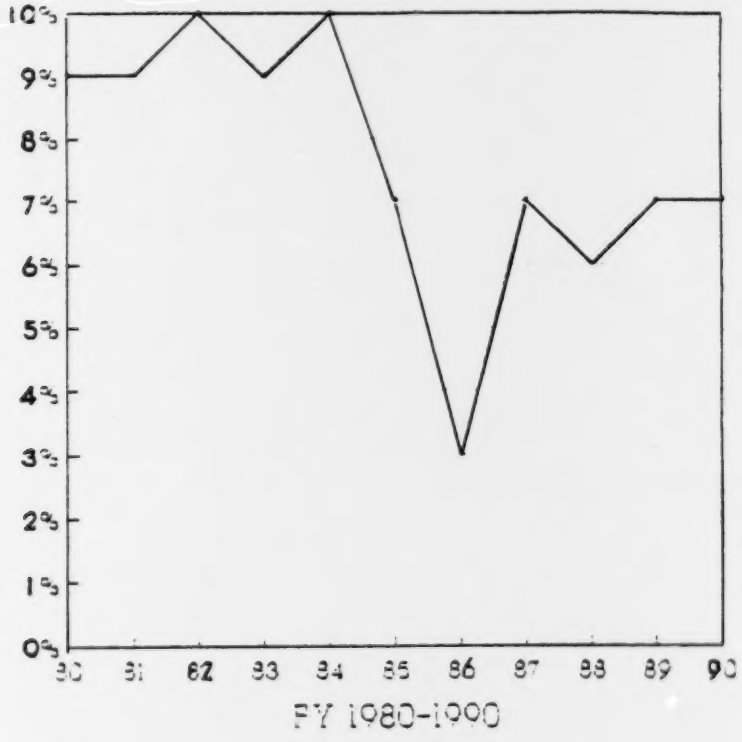


Figure 4. Percentage of DPP budget used by special projects



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